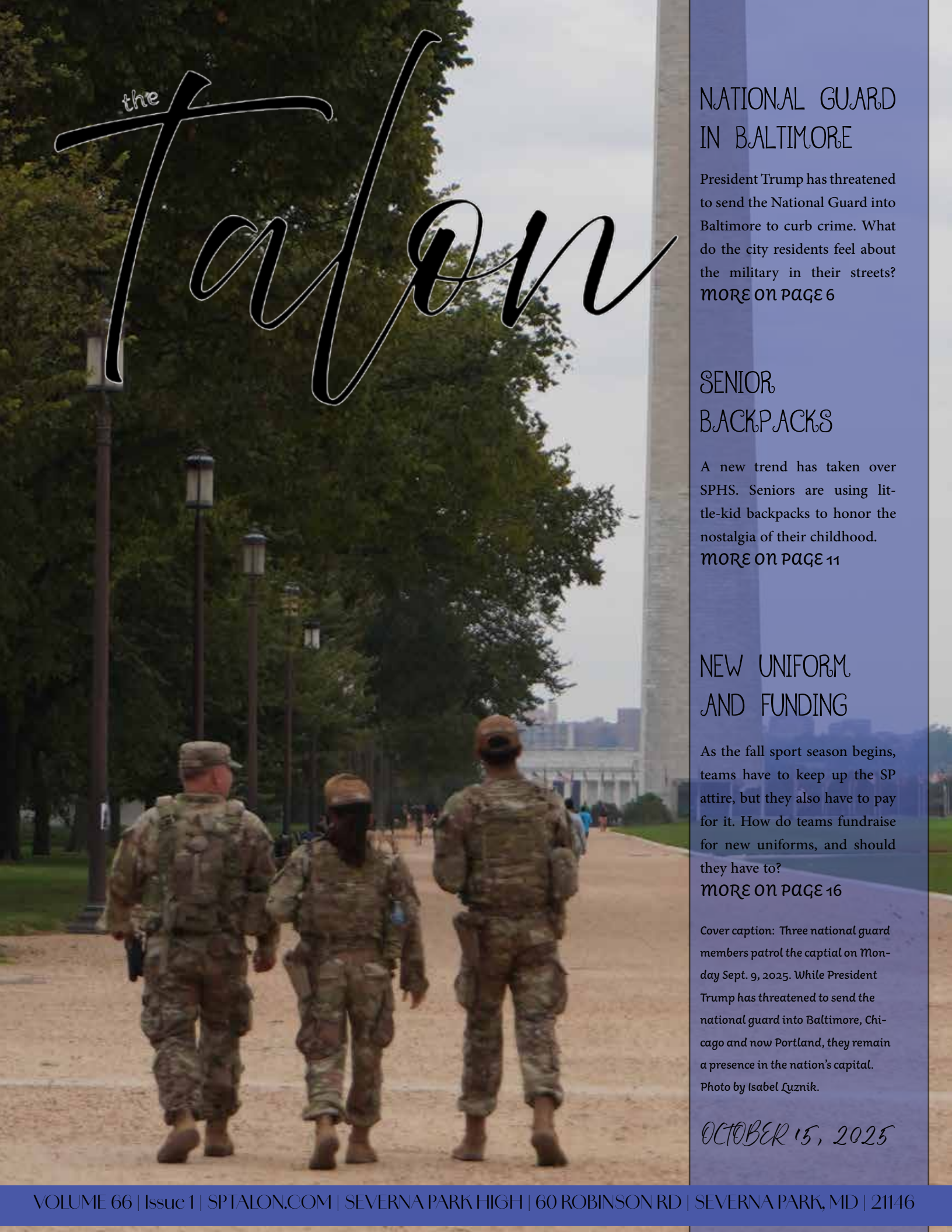




the *Talon*

NATIONAL GUARD IN BALTIMORE

President Trump has threatened to send the National Guard into Baltimore to curb crime. What do the city residents feel about the military in their streets?
MORE ON PAGE 6

SENIOR BACKPACKS

A new trend has taken over SPHS. Seniors are using little-kid backpacks to honor the nostalgia of their childhood.
MORE ON PAGE 11

NEW UNIFORM AND FUNDING

As the fall sport season begins, teams have to keep up the SP attire, but they also have to pay for it. How do teams fundraise for new uniforms, and should they have to?
MORE ON PAGE 16

Cover caption: Three national guard members patrol the capitol on Monday Sept. 9, 2025. While President Trump has threatened to send the national guard into Baltimore, Chicago and now Portland, they remain a presence in the nation's capital.
Photo by Isabel Luznik.

OCTOBER 15, 2025

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bathroom Policy

Jolene Robertson | Opinions Editor

Severna Park High School has an expanded bathroom policy that tracks when and where students are going to the bathroom that only affected males last year, but has expanded to females. "So the goal is to go back to normal where students can be trusted just to use the bathroom as they normally would, but I just want to make sure we have this in place so students understand the expectation of the bathrooms" principal Nathan Johnson said.



Mrs. Greenlee working on staff duty, taken on September 5 in the English/Art hallway. Photo by Jolene Robertson

Schlegel's Return

Andre Boone Jr. | News Editor

Former Severna Park Elementary teacher Matthew Schlegel is set to be placed back on payroll at AACPS in a report from WBAL TV 11 News after their acquittal of charges in August on 18 of the 22 counts. The county is still working on placement of Schlegel, but hasn't made final details public. AACPS Chief Communications Officer Bob Mosier said "Given that there are numerous processes still under way



Photo of Severna Park Elementary. Photo courtesy of AACPS.

in this matter, it would be inappropriate for me to offer any comment at this time."

WORLD FLAVOR

Sheehan Jeffers | Staff Writer

World Flavors was co-founded by junior Jonny Reneau and junior Matthew Stimpson on account that they both love learning about different cultures and food.

"We wanted to bring people together through food. Food is something everyone can



World Flavors club meeting presentation in September. Photo courtesy Jonny Reneau

connect over" Reneau said.

It's Academic

Halle Bierdeman | Staff Writer

Severna Park High School's "It's Academic" team competed at Centennial High School with other schools from around the East Coast, competing to answer as quickly and accurately as possible to a variety of academia questions.

"[It was] our a very first tournament in the standard division [and] we did well. There were something like 42 teams and we were around 38" adviser Mrs. Goldberg said.



It's Academic Team takes the show on the road to Centennial High School on October 4. Photo courtesy Mrs. Goldberg

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STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF: ELSA WEBSTER

NEWS EDITOR: ANDRE BOONE

FEATURES EDITOR: RIONNAH O'CONNOR

LIFESTYLE EDITOR: ANYA DIGGS

OPINIONS EDITOR: JOLENE ROBERTSON

SPORTS PRINT EDITOR: EMERSON SCOTT

SPORTS ONLINE EDITOR: NICOL CHOVANEC

COPY EDITOR: ELIZABETH ST. ANDRIE

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER: ELLA STOUTT

STAFF WRITERS: HALLE BIERDEMAN, ANGIE CALLAHAM, JAY CAMERON, HAL COSLER, ELLA FRETWELL, OLIVIA HESKETT, TAYLOR JACKSON, SHEEHAN JEFFERS, MAXWELL LIIMATTA, JILLIAN MARIANO, ROSIE MELNYCHENKO, CIARAN MERTZ, GRACE MOSMILLER, ADDIE MURPHY, KASEY NGUYEN, ARTIN TARPINIAN

ADVISER: VALERIE EARHART

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SPHS NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP SEMI-FINALISTS

Eight Anne Arundel County students named Semi-Finalist scholarship finalists.

Andre Boone Jr. | News Editor

The National Merit Scholarship program, managed by the National Merit Scholarship Competition (NMSC), is a program which recognizes a student's academic achievement, particularly in scoring high in the PSAT/NMSQT exam.

The program is highly significant, as recognition into this program includes \$2500 in scholarship money, access to various levels of scholarships and prestigious recognition for colleges to see.

English teacher Mrs. Kaufman describes how significant this program is and what metrics colleges use in regards to the program.

"There's a lot to it. It's not the only measure of a stu-

dent's capability, but another metric colleges can look at and a way for students to get opportunities. You can get some cash or some scholarships, which is a pretty big deal" English teacher Kaufman said.

Recently, eight Anne Arundel County students were named semi-finalists to this prestigious program, three of them from SPHS, seniors Christopher Lowman, Evan Crockett and Maya Kirstein. Finalist nominations are set to be announced in February, with these semi-finalists having an opportunity to be named finalists and eventually winners later between June and July.

"It's a data point in favor," Kaufman said, "It's definitely something for the com-

munity to celebrate, not just in terms of teachers at school but also families giving the support to these students and raising curious and motivated students willing to push themselves. These students are always on their grind; they're not just sitting there playing games on the computer or zoning out, they are actively working, and I'm really impressed by their work ethic."

These students share their strategies and preparation that they've used to score high on these SAT scores, with scores ranging between 1480-1520.

"I had a chicken biscuit from Chick Fil A," Lowman said. "It tastes really great and it gives you fuel for the test along with coffee. I did a bunch of practice problems from Khan Academy; it helped me to get prepared."

Kirstein said "A lot of studying...I ran a lot of practice tests, more than I can count, and followed questions online over and over again."

Some took PSAT prep classes from their English teachers in order to get sound advice for the English section of the PSAT.

"I took the PSAT prep class," Crockett said. "Honestly,

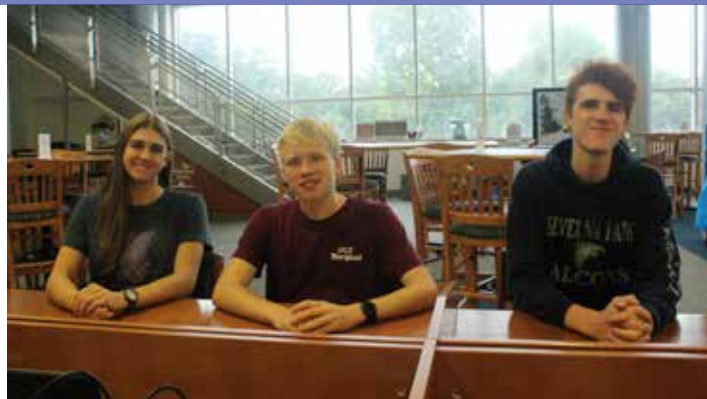
I didn't really study that much before the test, but Mr. Moskowitz's English section was pretty helpful."

There are also important ways to prepare even beyond the academic curriculum and outside of SAT testing in general, like being more verbal, gaining new ideas and perspective and looking at a ton of new genres that can correlate to a higher score.

"Be a reading omnivore," Kaufman said. "I don't just say that because I'm an English teacher, I say that because it's how you build your vocabulary. It's how you encounter new ideas that challenge you. I tell students that reading doesn't have to be reading a novel; it could be a self-help book, articles in a newspaper, game informer, "Popular Mechanics" or "Psychology Today." It doesn't matter what it is, read a lot. Try to reach a bunch of different kinds of things and think about it, look up words you don't understand and sort of immerse yourself in it and without even trying, you'll be absorbing a lot and do stronger not only on the verbal side of things, but it'll expose you to ideas and make you think about the math and science about things as well."

The scholarship has

Seniors Christopher Lowman, Evan Crockett and Maya Kirstein were named semi-finalists in the National Merit Scholarship program. They were notified in October of their placement in the national college scholarship competition and will find out later this year if they won. "It's definitely something for the community to celebrate, not just in terms of teachers at school but also families giving the support to these students" PSAT teacher Ms. Kaufman said. Photo by Hal Cosler



the potential to save many students' college applications whether it comes to scholarship money, a prestigious outlook or a way to show colleges you're academically ready.

"It provides a fair amount of money," Crockett said. "The scholarship will definitely be useful as I'll be putting that towards college to save me some money that I can put towards a car, a house, whatever I need."

"It'll be easier to get into college," Lowman said. "Once I've become a finalist, hopefully I'll get the scholarship and save some money in college."

Kirstein said "It'll give me more opportunities, I'm grateful that my parents have the money to pay for me to go to college, but if I can get a scholarship and go to college on a scholarship, that college

is going to be more invested in my success than if I just paid flat out, and so it'll mean I'll have more classes I want, what professors I like, and more."

Additionally, whatever pathway previous winners of the scholarship take, it helps them pursue that drive and passion to either go to prestigious universities or enroll in a liberal arts college.

"I think there's a lot of different pathways for people," Kaufman said. "I believe some winners chose to go to prestigious universities, and some have chosen not to go, whether it was a smaller liberal arts college, technical school, or to save money, a two year program at a community college like Anne Arundel and then transfer. I definitely think having a National Merit Scholarship would help students who have to drive to go to these presti-

gious schools, but there are also other pathways for people, and they should pick what's best for them."

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THE NATIONAL GUARD'S POTENTIAL DEPLOYMENT IN BALTIMORE

How some residents of the city feel about the potential of military deployment.

Elsa Webster | Editor-in-Chief

President Trump has made several threats about sending the national guard into Baltimore City in an attempt to control the crime rates in the city. This has sparked push back from Baltimore City mayor Brandon Scott and Maryland governor Wes Moore, leading them to lead a walk in protest on Sept. 5. While President Trump has not yet deployed the National Guard as they have been in cities such as D.C., he

has made comments in concern about the crime rates in Baltimore.

The residents of the city have strong feelings about the potential deployment of the military in Baltimore, many of them raising concerns over the lack of communications between the Trump administration and the leadership in Baltimore.

"I think that the crime in Baltimore has gone down,

not up, you know? And there's a lot of reasons why there's a lot of crime. And there's a lot of problems. I am not saying that there are not problems in Baltimore City. I mean, I've had my car broken into. I've been robbed. My head is not in the sand about, you know, some of the issues that we confront, but it is not the way to go about it," Baltimore City resident Stacy Arnold said. "And it needs to be in partnership with the citizens of Baltimore and with the governor and with the mayor. These need to be partnerships... This is not who we are. This is not who I want to be. This is not who we are, and I do not support this. It is not good."

Arnold has been a resident of Baltimore City for over 40 years where she has lived with her husband and raised her children. Her concern with the potential deployment comes from a fear over the "authoritarian direction" that this decision represents.

Many city residents share Arnold's concerns over the Trump administration's motivations behind this maneuver, fearing that it will cause a more unsafe feeling in the city.

"I honestly think there's probably some strategy in that for the administration

sending in too," Baltimore resident Stefani LaBrecque said. "Not only are we going to make parents and family and adults uncomfortable, but children will internalize this experience, seeing armed guards on the street corners, and that will have, I think, potentially negative mental health impacts for them, for potentially years to come. And for me, that really concerns me, not just for my own family, but for all of the kids in the city. Yeah, it makes me feel really, really heartsick to think about that happening."

With current data on crime rates in Baltimore City showing that homicides and other violent crimes are trending down compared to last year, many residents are feeling that the deployment of the national guard is unnecessary. CBS News has found that crime rates within the city have gone down 17.5% compared to 2024.

"I feel like a lot of the people that are living in the city aren't happy about the fact that he wants to deploy the National Guard, and I think it will just push more separation when Baltimore is actually experiencing record number lows of murder and crime than they ever have. So I think that it will just ignite more violence than decrease the violence," Balti

Caption: Since August, President Trump has made several comments threatening to deploy the National Guard in Baltimore City as well as Chicago. These comments have sparked discourse among residents of the city. "Those that don't really, truly understand cities like Baltimore and Chicago and so many others, folks that might live in more rural areas and have a limited understanding of what our communities are actually like. I think it paints a picture on the national news that these are spaces where there's huge amounts of crime and very violent. And even though there are some cases of crime and violence in every city and every community, I think there's a strategy there to create more division," Baltimore city resident Danny LaBrecque said. Photo by Isabel Luznik



more resident Chelsea Patten said.

The National Guard has not yet been deployed into Baltimore City, but the future remains unsure as to whether the Trump administration will go forward with this plan or whether the community resistance led by the governor of Maryland and the Baltimore City mayor will discourage their deployment.

Community response in Baltimore is varied about the National Guard's deployment, but residents of the city share a commonality in a hope of

their city to lose the stigma of crime as rates continue to trend downward.

"I love the city. And I think the people have an impression of the city that is like 'The Wire,' right? That's what people know about Baltimore," Arnold said. "I think a lot of it is misperception. So they're in support because it's a misperception about the city and misperception about what is actually going on. And who the people are, because it's a very small amount of people who are causing the problem."

Caption: The National Guard has been deployed in the nation's capital since Aug. 11 after President Trump stated that crime in the city was an ongoing problem. Since then, he has made threats to send the military into other cities such as Chicago, Portland and Chicago. "I think that it's coming from a negative place and I think that he hasn't stepped foot in the city to really know what it looks like, and I think that he's spewing a narrative that doesn't really exist for the current climate of what the city actually looks like," Baltimore resident Chelsea Patten said. Photo by Isabel Luznik



BY THE NUMBERS	BALTIMORE	PORTLAND	CHICAGO	WASHINGTON, DC
	2025: Homicides/ 68 22% Non Fatal Shootings/164 2024: Homocides/88 19% Non-fatal Shootings /164 *Baltimore Police	2025: Homicides/ 25 Aggravated Assault/1982 2024: Homocides/47 Aggravated Assault/2043 *Portland City	2024: Violent Crime/27694 6% Decrease between 2024 & 2023 2024: Violent Crime/29499	Violent Crime 2025: 1971 2024: 2728 *28% decrease All Crime 2025: 19543 2024: 22047 *11% decrease *Metropolitan Police



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RYAN BIANCO

Support on the sidelines.

Nicol Chovanec | Online Sports Editor

Enthusiastic, strong-willed and unique are the words that coaches and peers use to describe sophomore Ryan Bianco. Bianco is not your typical football sports manager; he can execute the duties of a sports manager with ease while having a substantial amount of knowledge about the game. Bianco is the junior varsity football sports manager. Head Varsity Football coach Nick Marks said "...he helped our other managers filling up bottles, carrying around different stations on the field, he helped me organize things that needed to be organized. On game days, same situation, helped on with the waters, got water to the players who came off the field, and helped me with any tasks that I needed that he could handle."

Bianco spends the majority of his time with the JV team because they are in

the same grade and many of the people on the team know Bianco personally. "I've known Ryan since 6th grade... Ryan is so unique because he always knows stuff about sports, especially the Ravens" sophomore Ethan Fish said.

The extensive knowledge Bianco has about football sets him apart from the other managers on the team. Bianco and Marks bond together on the sidelines by talking about what is happening on the field in front of them, and also what happened in Baltimore at the Raven's stadium the night before.

"Like I said, he is easy to talk to, he likes to chit-chat with everybody about what is going on on the field, he will come up to me to talk about sports. We talk about football, what is going on with the Ravens" Marks said.

Second year football manager, sophomore Ryan Bianco working the Crofton vs. Severna Park football game. Bianco is a big fan of football his favorite team being the Ravens. "I like football and I basically can't play it so I want to be a part of the team" Bianco said. Photo by Quilyn Bary



Having a person like Bianco on the sidelines, a football fanatic and a friend to many, makes football games and practices that much better.

"Ryan is a great kid, he is very personable, he has a lot of knowledge on football so it is great to have him observe" Marks said. "Ryan came in, he is friends with a lot of guys on the team and just having him be able to be a part of the experience, it was great to have him out there" Marks said.

A familiar face on the sidelines is always nice to see. Bianco is quite fond of his role as sports manager. He enjoys being around the players, helping out whenever he can, and being able to put his football knowledge into Severna Park's football program.

Bianco's favorite part about his role as sports manager is "being a part of a team" he said. Bianco is unable to physi-

cally play football, but takes advantage of the situation of the sports managing position to get the experience of being on the football team.

Bianco, who is wheel chair bound said, "Our school is actually really accessible. There's a gate that opens right to the track and I've actually been to away games and they're all like the same setup."

Bianco's role as football manager has done great things for football players and coaches, and has also opened the doors for Bianco to be a part of a growing football program.

The environment during the practices is electric and contains mutual respect, "everybody treats him the way that he should be treated, he is a part of the team. It is always good to see that" Marks said.



SEVERNA PARK 2025 HAUNTED TRAIL

Severna Park resident organizes haunted trail for all.

Taylor Jackson | Staff Writer



Kyndle Quinones 2024 haunted trail. The trail is found in her backyard in the Severna Park neighborhood, Park Ridge. Various decorations, including skeletons, witches and defaced baby dolls are featured. Music goes along with the experience, catering to guests of all ages. Photo by Kyndle Quinones

Severna Park's family-friendly haunted attractions are returning with spooky fun for all ages this Halloween, featuring a special twist from Kyndle Quinones, who is reviving her own haunted trail with fresh scares and eerie surprises for the whole community.

"I just love Halloween," haunted trail organizer Quinones said. "My mother would have Halloween parties when I was younger, and the whole neighborhood would come. I love doing this for the children and the families — they've all watched it grow throughout the years." Quinones' haunted trail is designed to offer just the right amount of fright and fun for every age group.

The front yard welcomes younger visitors with milder decorations and festive sights, while the backyard

offers a more eerie path for those brave enough to venture through.

"Basically, everything in the front yard is family-friendly," Quinones said. "But if they choose to go in the back, it's basically 'enter at your own risk.' I try to keep it so that even a scared little one can go through with a brave brother or sister holding their hand."

This thoughtful approach has resonated with the community. Over the years, families from beyond the neighborhood have enjoyed experiencing the haunted trail, which now boasts 11 animatronics and custom sound and lighting effects.

"We've had grandparents come from other neighborhoods just to see it," Quinones said. "People can't believe all the time and detail we put into it."

Part of what sets Quinones' trail apart is the attention to atmosphere, not just scares. "I use Amazon Echoes throughout the yard so I can control the music depending on who's coming through," Quinones said. She is able to change the music for all age groups, allowing the experience to be more family friendly or eerie. What started as a neighborhood tradition has now turned into something much bigger and possibly even donation-based in the future due to its popularity. "Families look forward to it every year," Quinones said. "It's something they can do together, laugh about, and remember. That's what makes it all worth it."

Creating the haunted trail is no small challenge. Quinones and her family spend nearly a month preparing for opening night. This year, they're even considering bringing in professional help to enhance the lighting and sound design. The haunted trail is a lot of work for the whole thing to be complete. "It needs to make sense otherwise, it's just a bunch of junk in the backyard, which you don't want. We want it to be spooky, but still a story that families can follow and enjoy," Quinones said.

For many local teens, the haunted trail isn't just about

the scares, it's about the adrenaline rush that keeps them coming back, the excitement of not knowing, and the shared experience of facing fears together.

"I enjoy the adrenaline and the spooky atmosphere," sophomore Addy O'Brien said. "The surprise scares create a rush of excitement and catch me off guard, which makes the experience even more intense."

O'Brien prefers outdoor haunted attractions for their unpredictability. O'Brien enjoys walking through darkness, not knowing what's going to jump out which makes it more of a surprise and that's what makes haunted attractions fun.

That thrill is exactly what keeps teens coming back year after year, not just for the scares, but the unforgettable moments they create with others.

"Everything makes a haunted trail scary. The actors popping out, the creepy vibe, the jump scares. But I love the adrenaline, especially when I'm with my friends. We always end up laughing and joking about it afterward," freshman Juliana Malena said, capturing the spirit of these haunted attractions.

Not everyone in Severna Park is eager to embrace the

Story Continued on Page 10
"Severna Park 2025 Haunted Trail"

SCHOOL LUNCHES

Students believe that school lunch should be provided for all students regardless of their family income.

Ella Fretwell | Staff Writer

During Covid, the US had a program where if school children went to their local school they could pick up a free lunch regardless of their income, no questions asked. About five years after the pandemic few states still provide free school lunches for students of any class. In many countries, there is legislation ensuring that every student is fed when they are at school. In nine states this is also true, but what about Maryland? In the state of Maryland, in order to qualify for free lunch, a student's family size and income are taken into account.

"I think that school lunches should be free because

they force us to be here. People say that they don't want their tax money to go to school lunches, but they are fine with their [tax money] going to feed prisoners murder, rape, theft and arson," junior Olivia Hermann said.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools offers flexible pricing on school lunches ranging from free to reduced pricing depending on the family's income. However, the full price of lunch for high schoolers without any aid is three dollars. The law in Maryland states that schools must have at least 180 days in a school year. This means that if a student buys lunch every day, they would be

spending a minimum of \$540 every year. This leads some students to believe that schools should be responsible for both educating and feeding the students that go there, in order to best set them up for success.

"Lunch should be free for all students regardless of socioeconomic status," junior Jocelyn Renn said. "Students learn better when they're not hungry, so to create an environment conducive to learning free lunches are essential."

One final argument that students had for free school lunch is that it prevents low income students from being sin-

gled out since they would no longer be the only ones getting lunch for free.

"Even though the poor kids get food for free they don't want to be singled out and isn't that what America stands for, equality?" Hermann said.

In order for the school to support the health of all students and best meet their needs, students say it makes sense to provide free lunches for everyone. Through examples in the past during the pandemic and in other locations, it seems achievable for Maryland to give free lunches to all students.

A student's taco picked up from the Severna Park lunch line. Severna Park High School serves a rotating menu of food, with tacos as an option many Tuesdays. Students can purchase lunch from the cafeteria if they don't want to bring one. Graphic by Sheehan Jeffers Photo by Ella Fretwell



Story Continued from Page 9 "Severna Park 2025 Haunted Trail"

fright. Junior Abby Roberts admits she's not the biggest fan of being scared.

"Everything about it is scary for me, but the 'unknown' is the scariest part," Roberts said. "I 100% prefer to avoid all scary experiences. I only go if my friends make me." Nonetheless, she finds some value in the experience especially when shared with others. The thrill of being scared makes Roberts' every

move cautious because she expects something coming, just doesn't know when.

The Severna Park haunted trail provides families with thrills and enjoyment. Quinones is confident that her trail will be even more memorable this year "People just love it," Quinones said. Quinones' haunted trail will open on Halloween night in Park Ridge.

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SENIOR BACKPACKS

Seniors are using little-kid backpacks to honor the nostalgia of their childhood.

Anya Diggs | Lifestyle Editor

As the new school year begins, senior backpacks are all the hype among the class of 2026. Senior backpacks are a growing social media trend where seniors, mostly girls, buy little kid backpacks to bring to school. Ranging from Buzz Lightyear to Sesame Street to My Little Pony, seniors are wearing backpacks that they could have owned in Kindergarten. While most view it as just a Tiktok trend, the phenomenon has an underlying purpose to unite the senior class, as they complete their last year together.

"Everyone's rolling up on the first day with glitter on their backpack, and we're just laughing at each other and complimenting each other. It's definitely fun," senior Olivia Hilbert said.

Although the class of 2025 participated in senior backpacks last year, this year the trend has flourished in popularity. No matter where you

turn in the hallway, you will see someone with their throw-back backpack. The difference this year between classes comes down to their enthusiasm.

"Our 2026 class is big on school spirit and traditions and so lots of us wanted to carry that out our senior year," senior Sadie Mack said.

The movement helps the soon-to-be graduates connect with their inner child before entering their adult lives. As they live this last year of childhood, many of them picked senior backpacks that remind them of their younger years.

"I was absolutely obsessed with unicorns and went through a long phase of having unicorn everything, so I knew that I had to have a unicorn backpack for senior year," Mack said.

Even though most of the seniors have a large sense of school spirit and are all looking forward to graduation, not all of them have participated in senior backpacks. Senior Ty Maddox speaks for many of the senior boys when he admits to not having a senior backpack.

"I don't know, I guess, the girls' backpacks tend to be like princess ones, or more girly stuff. I feel like the guys don't really fall under that category. They just want a normal backpack," Maddox said. De-

spite a personal unwillingness to partake, he still agrees that it is a fun concept. "I think it's kind of cool. I think it's funny."

However, some senior girls, including Mack, have an alternate opinion on why the boys decided not to take part in the senior backpacks trend this year.

"A lot of [girls] are more active on social media and see the trends and want to participate in them," Mack said.

As a junior, Mimi Castaneda is also not participating but is fond of the trend and is looking forward to partaking next year.

"I really want to do one of my favorite characters as a kid, and I just hope all my other friends also want to do senior backpacks with me," Castaneda said. "I think the backpacks will bring us closer together, espe-



cially since it's out last year with each other."

Senior backpacks have done their job for the 2026 class, exciting them for graduation and the start of a new chapter in their lives. In their last year of bliss, they have taken the chance to celebrate the nostalgia with an homage to their little kid selves.

Hilbert said, "Our senior class is just very excited to be seniors, so we're going to take whatever opportunity hands on. If there's a chance to do something fun and do something creative, we're gonna do it."

Seniors Ava Gaudieri, Quinn Allison and Brooklyn LaBrier show off their senior backpacks on their last first day of school. They pose in the senior parking lot in front of a car decorated for senior year. "Our 2026 class is big on school spirit and traditions and so lots of us wanted to carry that out our senior year," senior Sadie Mack said. Photo Courtesy of Quinn Allison



SPOOKY SEASON STARTS NOW

Costumes, decor and candy bring in celebratory months ahead.

Kasey Nguyen | Staff Writer

Halloween is showing up earlier than ever in 2025, and if you're someone who loves pumpkins, costumes and spooky fun, you're going to notice it right away this year.

This year, stores started selling Halloween decor in July, meaning that summer wasn't even over yet before the pumpkins and skeletons began to appear on the shelves. This new trend has been referred to as "Summerween," and it's growing absolutely rapidly. In an article from RetailNext, it is said that Americans will spend around \$11.7 billion celebrating Halloween during the current year. More shocking is that they are bound to do nearly half of it even before October comes to a

close.

The aesthetic has also changed quite thoroughly. Instead of the same bright hues like orange, green and purple that the rest of us use, natural elements and earth tones are being used by most families. As "Better Homes & Gardens" chronicled, the Halloween trends are headed towards pumpkins in white, beige or even wood, instead of neon-colored plastic. People are also becoming greener, recycling party decor, buying more permanent ones that don't go out of style after one season and even making do-it-yourself Halloween craft projects utilizing items they already own.

The costumes this

year are also largely pop culture-themed. A recent story by "Good Morning America" states that the recent premiere of "Jurassic World: Rebirth" has put dinosaur costumes at an all-time high. TV characters and movie characters are always so popular, but group costumes and duet costumes are especially popular this year. So that means those people who want to coordinate with their families or groups of friends, either a superhero group or a group of characters from the same show.

At the same time, the gothic fashion is becoming trendy. As a home decor website, Veranda indicates, vintage Victorian-style fashion like black ankle-length dresses, dark lipstick and even eerie locations inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's poetry make their way. The

fashion extends to decor—furniture is also in fashion, with homes being decorated so that they look more like haunted mansions than haunted houses.

So what does all of this mean for you? Halloween 2025 is earlier, moodier and more creative than ever before. Whether you're planning to dress up as a dinosaur, decorate your yard with creepy but classy pumpkins or just collect as much candy as possible, this year's Halloween trends prove that the holiday is only getting bigger and better.

Megan Doan, a junior, who has already planned her outfit in her mind, summed it up: "The new trends keep Halloween feeling new, but the best thing is still hanging out with friends."

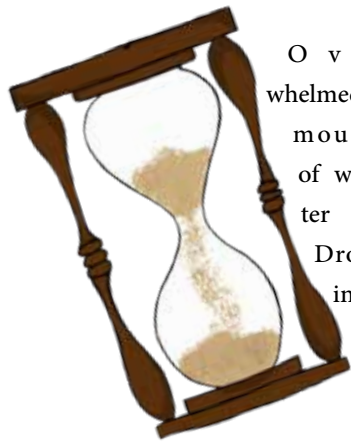
Shoppers browse the aisles of Spirit Halloween, where decorations and costumes are coming onto the shelves sooner than ever this year for 2025. "The candy is my favorite part of Halloween," sophomore Halle Bierdeman said. Products are already on the shelves in most stores. Photo by Kasey Nguyen



BEST HOMEWORK AND STUDY STRATEGIES

Learn how to turn work into a minute's worth.

Elizabeth St. Andrie | Copy and Managing Editor



Overwhelmed by mountains of work after school? Drowning in piles of AP assignments? Try these six strategies to stop procrastinating and break things down into a manageable size.

"CHUNK" YOUR ASSIGNMENTS.

When you're feeling overwhelmed, it can be hard to imagine getting all your work done. Try breaking your assignments down into smaller pieces, and focus on completing one piece at the time. A test prep and studying advice website, Revolution Prep, calls this the "antidote to procrastination," because it "reduces anxiety and provides a clear roadmap, making the start of a task less cumbersome." If you need to, cover up the other sections so that they don't distract you.

SET A TIMER.

If you keep getting off track, tell yourself to complete the current part of the assignment

the next 20 minutes. You can adjust the time based on what kind of assignment it is, but keep it short. This is the basis of the Pomodoro Technique, which alternates 25 minutes of work and a five-minute break. W. Patrick Bryan, a writer for the University of Arizona's student help center, notes that this technique "leverages the sense of urgency by limiting your time to complete a task to small intervals and encouraging focus." Egg timers work well for this strategy, because you can see at a glance how much time has passed. If you go over the time, don't worry. "You may find that once you get started, after two or three pomodoros, you don't want to keep taking breaks," Bryan wrote. Just shut off the timer to keep your momentum.

DO YOUR EASIEST OR HARDEST ASSIGNMENT FIRST.

This strategy depends on what will motivate you. If you think having more momentum from finishing other assignments will help you finish your large, overwhelming assignment, start with something simple and work your way up. If, however, you need to stop procrastinating, take Big Future's advice and "do the more challenging assignments first so you don't have to face them at the end." Big Future is a college planning program similar to

Naviance. It's also a great idea to combine strategies -- for example, you can start with your big project and then "chunk" it into manageable parts.

GIVE YOURSELF REWARDS.

Have an assignment you hate? Break it down into pieces and give yourself a reward -- a small piece of candy or a pretzel, for example -- for each piece that you complete, to keep yourself motivated. Cornell University found that giving people immediate bonuses "led to an almost 20 percent increase in the percent of people sticking with the task after the reward was removed compared with a delayed reward." Place your rewards far enough away that you aren't tempted to snack on them in between, or you could just get someone else to hand them to you. Place a bigger reward at the very end, maybe that doomscrolling you were doing before.

MAKE A SCHEDULE.

If you're worried about getting everything done, make two lists: what you need to do, and what you want to do. Harvard University mentions that "a study plan with set goals can help you feel more prepared and can give you a roadmap to follow." Next to each item, write

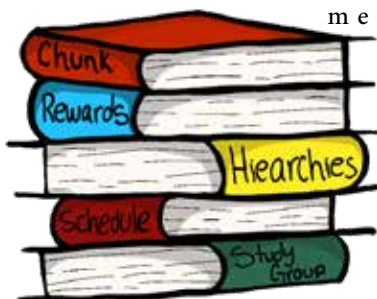
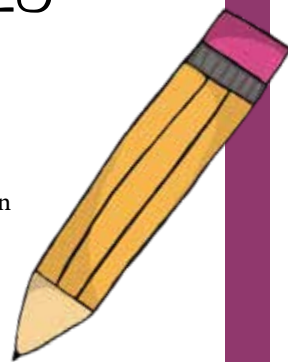
down an estimate of how much time it will take.

Now, figure out how you're going to do it. Find a daily schedule planner -- some are already divided into hourly or half-hour blocks -- and plot out when you're going to do each item. It's okay to take breaks between assignments, as long as you get everything done. Leave room for flexibility, too.

CREATE A STUDY GROUP.

Get together with your friends to work on homework and prepare for tests. Falcon 60 can be a good time for this. Also, study groups let you teach others. Harvard's Academic Resource Center notes that "having the opportunity to explain concepts in your own words helps solidify your understanding of those concepts." You can create practice quizzes to do with your friends to practice this.

Don't be afraid to adapt just these strategies so that they work for you. Some people feel constrained by schedules, and timers can stress out others. Find what works for you, and use it.



Objects including a timer, a notebook, and a stack of books illustrate the many ways to implement study strategies. There are other strategies you can use, too, so look online for good ones. Graphics by Angie Callahan

Sports Highlights

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER

It really is no surprise that the girls varsity soccer team is on such a roll right now. An undefeated season? Nobody knows, what we do know is that we can support these Falcons by cheering on them on the stands.

Severna Park vs. North County	4-0
Severna Park vs. Arundel	2-0
Severna Park vs. Southern	3-0

BOYS VARSITY FOOTBALL

The first two games for the boys varsity football team gave fans a reason to fear for an unsuccessful season. Both games were incredibly close, 4 points separated the Falcons and the win against Boys Latin and Northeast. The Falcons showed their true fighting spirit when they went four straight wins in a row, and it all stated at the first home game.

Severna Park vs. Crofton	28-27
Severna Park vs. Severn Run	39-0
Severna Park vs. Meade	44-7
Severna Park vs. Old Mill	17-14

COED VARSITY GOLF

They might not be in-season A division champions, but the Severna Park golf team has a shiny new plaque as a present for the school. These Falcons were crowned AACPS County Champions at this years County Championship. Nicol Chovanec has successfully secured her third County Champion title by shooting a 76. Lily Wells secured second place (77). Logan Clarke makes his first appearance at the County Championship and blows everyone away with a 76 to place 5th.

GIRLS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

Girls varsity volleyball has been fighting back and forth. Starting off the season with three straight losses, but the coming back with four straight wins.

Severna Park vs. South River	3-0
Severna Park vs. Annapolis	3-0
Severna Park vs. Chesapeake	3-0
Severna Park vs. McDonogh	3-0

FIELD HOCKEY

The goals of the team.

Grace Mosmiller | Staff Writer

The Severna Park High School girls varsity field hockey team is back on the field for the season, and despite losing a talented senior class, the new team hopes to end this season just like the last - with winning a state championship.

Junior captain Ryleigh Connell knows being a leader this year won't be easy, but she believes "all the young players are full of heart and grit." She stresses the importance of positivity on the team, saying "the biggest thing is just encouraging each

other," whether it is just cheering someone on when they do something well, or "if someone is having a hard day, pulling them aside and checking on them."

For freshman Teagan Cavanaugh, the highlight of being on varsity is the bond between the girls.

"I love playing with all the older girls and all of them are so nice to me," Cavanaugh said. "It is just so much fun to play on a team with all of your best friends." Her goal for this year is a "2peat!"- another state championship win. Last

JV FOOTBALL SEASON

Football season and players expectations.

Addie Murphy | Staff Writer

The Severna Park Falcons junior varsity football team is preparing for the 2025 season with a focus on development, discipline and laying the groundwork for future success. Although the JV level is often all about developing players for the varsity level, this team has the possibility to make a big impact. With strong returning players ready to lead and promote the success of the team, the Falcons have been preparing to get the season off to a good start. One of these players is sophomore Ian Langston.

"I think we have a

great team this year and we are definitely going to have a winning record," Langston said.

This optimistic mentality is one of the driving factors for the team as a goal setting strategy, giving them something bigger than themselves to work towards. Another positive point for the junior varsity team is the return of sophomore cornerback Brody Pugh. Pugh is the face of the defense and has become a playmaker and leader for the team. His command of the defense will be crucial as the Falcons attempt to win the county

year they faced Westminster winning 4-0.

Transfer student, sophomore Ella Worthington has already noticed how special the program is.

"I would say Severna Park is super competitive, but definitely super fun," Worthington said. Her goal this year matches with the rest of her teammates: "I hope that we win states and are really successful throughout the season, while playing as a team."

Head coach Shannon Garden believes that the biggest challenge this year is the loss of experienced seniors.

"Inexperience will be the biggest challenge because we did lose so many seniors who actually started and played

in a lot of games," Garden said. "But it is also exciting to have and see all the new talent and work with them and see how far we can bring them along."

While Coach Garden admits that she misses having many seniors, "the younger ones are so much fun" she said. "Our goal is to get better everyday, have everybody work really hard. It is hard to replace ten seniors on the field. And you know, we are feeling that in some things, but we are working really hard in practice to be able to perform the best we can, and I do appreciate how hard the younger players are working, and our goal is to win the games we should win and hope that they prepare us for a nice playoff run."

With the girls moving back up to the 4A conference after last year's win, Connell said she hopes they can have just as much success. Coach

Garden agrees, saying that while challenges lie ahead, the Falcons mix of young energy and hard work could set them up for success.



Varsity Field Hockey practicing before a big game. Pictured are Izzi Scarfo (left) and Ryleigh Connell (right). These two junior field hockey players get excited for their next game of the 2025-2026 fall sports season. Photo by: Grace Mosmiller

championship and all other games against county opponents. Pugh said he's ready to embrace the responsibility of leading the defense.

From the junior varsity perspective, leadership is an adapting topic. It certainly can be challenging to step into a leadership role when players have only a year of high school under their belt, but that is why the team stands out. They have been able to amplify strong voices and create leaders who have filled big shoes in limited time.

"We have a great group of guys and veteran coaches. So I think with all that combined it will make it a great season," Pugh said.

The 2025 team looks very good this year and the

team has been practicing very hard to get a winning record. This shows that coaching really does go a long way, and the belief the team has in their coaches makes it easier for them to grow, since they know that they have a coach with their best interests at heart.

The developments shown so far this season have become a blessing and a curse for the team this season. This is because as strength is shown at the junior varsity level it then becomes common practice to pull these talents up to the varsity level. By doing this, the varsity team does gain a valuable player, but on the opposite side of that scale, it means the junior varsity team has to give up talent.

The Falcons success

this season will be determined by how well every individual athlete works together and how well they communicate as a team. Discipline on both sides of the ball, offense and defense, is equally important, with emphasis put on communication

and effort towards the team. Though there could be individual standouts, the strength of the team will be everyone working together as a whole and that will lead the 2025 JV football team to a winning record.

The JV football team is warming up for their game against Boys Latin. JV lost 22-7 on September 5. The team is working hard in practice and games to win the county championship. "We have a great group of guys and veteran coaches. So I think with all that combined it will make it a great season," sophomore Brody Pugh said. Photo by Brody Pugh



NEW UNIFORMS AND FUNDING

Fall sports with new jersey's and if the school should pay for them

Emerson Scott | Sports Print Editor

As students begin to file back into classrooms and prepare themselves for a new and exciting year of high school. Another factor that comes into play is the thrill of the fall season for Severna Park Athletics. The fall sports include boys and girls soccer, volleyball, field hockey, golf, cheer and football. These teams work tirelessly every season to compete and carry the name SP to dominate levels within their field of play, and something they all have in common is the need for a uniform that not only abides by county standard and dons the SP logo, but also is fit for athletes to perform their best in. But there is also a slew of questions that arise around this topic, with the main being how should said jerseys be funded?

The athletics department is one to be proud of and has done a good job over the years in terms of regulating and controlling the ins and outs of sports and the activities revolving around sports. But when it comes to uniforms the department along with the county, handles it a different manner. What teams end up doing is raising money on their own through avenues such as fundraisers, team dues, donation links and more. But as a public school should the athletes have to collect money on their own for something that can be con-

sidered a sports necessity?

"I feel like if there is so much money in the boosters and the school, they should use that money for jerseys" but she also made the point that "It may be fair though, because all of our sports teams have to" junior soccer player Lainey Kaminskas said.

The point of equity is very true when it comes to distribution of athletic finances, and that benefits for one sport should be seen across all. But when it comes to the money provided by the county that is where the cycle begins.

According to the approved Operating & Capital Budget monetary distribution for athletics in Anne Arundel county, there is \$674,632 approved for athletic supplies and materials and \$247,579 approved for equipment across the 14 public high schools. "From what I understand, our AD, Mr. Kaufman, has a budget as well. I'm not sure what his purchase list includes exactly but it is a great question to ask him. I know he has used it for nets/goals/balls etc" Falcon Boosters Board member Bethany Fish said.

With this money along side money from the boosters program, the needs of the sports team is determined and based on that, some teams will be provided with more money

than others. When it comes to uniforms, The Falcons Athletic Booster Club provides supplemental funding for uniforms, but does not cover the uniforms in full.

"The Falcon Athletic Booster Club proudly supports all 21 athletic teams at SPHS by providing supplemental funding for uniforms. While this support helps offset costs, it does not cover uniforms in full. To promote fairness and consistency across the program, sixteen teams receive uniform supplements on a three-year rotation. Five teams—whose uniforms consist solely of t-shirts or swim caps—receive annual funding due to their lower cost" Fish said.

Since the uniforms can't be covered in full, the approximately \$48,000 for supplies and materials for should then cover the rest, but that is seemingly not the case. Booster does have membership fees and fundraising for teams, but doesn't take a percentage from teams, "The Falcon Athletic Boosters Club does not take a fixed "cut" of the money raised for personal gain or overhead. Instead, it operates

Story Continued on online at www.sptalon.com "Sports Uniforms"

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AND COVERAGE



Sophomore Riley Buck and junior Ruby Bauer pose in new soccer uniforms outside of a team dinner. The team has since decided to return the jerseys to get them fixed to better suit a women's team. As for the recent games, they have been sporting the Under Armour uniform from the previous three years. Photo by Maria Bragg

